

Homa 0103

In response to these assertions, the Examiner states (at page 6 of the *Detailed Action*) that Antos et al. "clearly provides" an example of an "oxygen free ambient" in example 2 ([0043]), "wherein only He and GeCl₄ gases are used for the treatment".

While applicant agrees that only He and GeCl₄ are used for the "treatment" in example 2, the example clearly describes the process as occurring in a "furnace", which is known in the art to have an "ambient" of air, unless otherwise described as being flushed, evacuated, or the like. Clearly, with the preform tube being "placed in a furnace and heated to 1000°", there will be oxygen present in the ambient. It is precisely the components of the ambient that are addressed in the process of the method of the present invention, where the proper combination of ambient and flow gases that achieves the desired result of eliminating excess oxygen.

Antos et al. does not describe any specific "ambient" requirements for the furnace. It may only be presumed, therefore, that the ambient is the conventional – air. It cannot be presumed that the ambient is "oxygen-free". Without this teaching, applicants assert that Antos et al. (either alone, or with any of the remaining cited references) cannot be found to "anticipate" or render "obvious" independent claims 1 and 19 (as previously amended), or any of the other claims which depend therefrom.

Applicant thus respectfully requests the Examiner to review this rejection and find claims 1-20 to be in condition for allowance over Antos et al.

If for some reason or other the Examiner does not agree that the case is ready to issue and that an interview or telephone conversation would further the prosecution, the Examiner is invited to contact applicant's attorney at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

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